

Cherry

History

It is not known where cherries originated from, but we do know they have been a popular fruit for centuries. Cherry pits were found in Stone-Age caves across Europe. Roman conquerors were known to spread their favorite cherry varieties across Europe to Britain during the 1st century. Cherries are also an important fruit in Japan. This country has celebrated the blossoming of cherry trees for centuries.

Cherries first made their way to North America by European settlers in the 1600's. Later, French settlers planted cherry pits they had brought from Normandy throughout the Great Lakes region. It wasn't until the 1850's when cherry farming really started. A Presbyterian missionary planted a number of cherry trees in Michigan that flourished due to the ideal cherry-growing weather: cold winters and cool summers. After that success, cherry orchards were planted across Michigan and cherry production increased.

Sweet and tart are the two types of cherries grown. Each of them has many different varieties available for purchase. The most common sweet cherry variety is the Bing cherry. This cherry originated in Oregon and received its name from the Chinese workers on the cherry farm.

The Montmorency cherry is the most popular tart cherry variety. This cherry is popular for eating and making pies, preserves, and juice. Most of the tart cherries grown in the US are from Michigan, but Wisconsin does produce a large crop.

Fun facts

- Michigan produces 75% of the tart cherries grown in the US
- Oregon and Washington produce over 60% of the US sweet cherries
- Traverse City, MI is the cherry capital of the world
- Cherries are a member of the rose family
- Cherries have a hard pit in the middle so are classified as a stone fruit
- Cherries don't ripen once they have been picked
- Door County WI has been growing cherries since 1896.



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